

gave their own idea back again to the masses with the approval of the societal authority. The masses insisted on having acts and apparatus provided by which to satisfy their application of dogma. The power of the keys and the treasure of salvation were provided accordingly. The souls of the people were torn by the antagonism between the wild passions of the age and the ecclesiastical restraints on conduct. They feared the wrath of God and hell to come. The ritual and sacramental system furnished a remedy. The flagellants were a phenomenon of seething, popular passion, outside of the church and unapproved by its authority. Antony of Padua (f 1231) started the movement by his sermons on repentance and the wrath of God. Processions of weeping, praying, self-scourging, and half-naked penitents appeared in the streets of all the towns of Christendom. "Nearly all enemies made friends. Usurers and robbers made haste to restore ill-gotten goods, and other vicious men confessed and renounced vanity. Prisons were opened. Prisoners were released. Exiles were allowed to return. Men and women accomplished works of pity and holiness, as if they feared the all-powerful God would consume them with fire from heaven."¹ This movement was altogether popular. It broke out again in 1349, in connection with the Black Death. Flagellation for thirty-three and a half days was held to purge from all sin. This was heresy and the flagellants were persecuted. The theory was a purely popular application by the masses of the church doctrine of penance, outside of the church system. It reappeared from time to time. The dancing mania began at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1373 and lasted for several years.² It was an outlet for high nervous

tension under
which the population was suffering on account of
great calamities,
social distress, and superstitious interpretations of
the same. In
short, the period was one of monstrous phenomena,
extravagant
passions, and unreasonable acts.

216. Gregariousness of the Middle Ages. " To
estimate fully
the force of these popular ebullitions in the
Middle Ages, we
must bear in mind the susceptibility of the people
to contagious

¹ Michael, *Gesch. d. Deutschen Volkes*, II, 255-258.

² Lea, *Inpus.*, II, 381, 393.